

## Harry Chapin

# "Stranger With The Melodies"

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It was my first night in that rooming house  
In the last room down the hall  
I heard a hoarse voice and an old guitar  
Coming through the paper thin walls

A crazy nonsense nursery rhyme  
That did not mean a thing  
But for the first of what was to be a thousand times  
This is what I hear him sing

Hold that D chord on the old guitar  
'Til I found the G  
Drop it down to old E minor  
'Til the A chord rolls back home around to D

I had to lay there listening  
It seemed he was in the room  
This stranger with his melody  
Singing there in the gloom

And he repeated it over and over again  
Such a soft and sinkin' sound  
It was kind of like a music box  
That was slowly winding down

You see, he sang it, he hummed it  
Whistled it, and he strummed it  
He laughed it and he cried it  
He did everything but hide it

And he sang  
Hold that D chord on the old guitar  
'Til I found the G  
Drop it down to old E minor  
'Til the A chord rolls back home around for me

So I lay there in that lumpy bed  
Countin' choruses instead of sheep  
'Til I banged on the wall and out I called  
"Hey bub, I need some sleep"

The sudden void of silence

Then I heard that hoarse voice say  
"It weren't so long ago, boy  
They paid me to play "

I said, "It's kind of late for music, sir  
Two hours 'til it's daylight"  
He answered, "I need my music most  
In these dark hours of the night

You see I've tried gettin' high on something son  
But it only brings me down  
Staying dry don't work out better, boy  
'Cause my eyes get wet and I drown

Won't you please let me continue  
And I'll be in your debt?  
You see I'm not singing to remember, son  
I'm just singing to forget"

And he sang  
Hold that D chord on the old guitar  
'Til I found the G  
Drop it down to old E minor  
'Til the A chord rolls back home around for me

That's when I said  
"If I'm supposed to listen to you sir  
Just one quick question then  
Why in the hell do you sing one song  
Over and over again?"

And this is what he said  
He said, "I gave her the music, son  
She gave me the words  
Together we'd write the kind of songs  
The angels must have heard

Of course we'd fight like cats and dogs  
But life ain't no rosebud dream  
Still whatever we'd do everybody knew  
We truly were a team

I can't remember now if I done her wrong  
Or if she done wrong to me  
But all I know that when I let her go  
That it did not set me free"

That's when I said, "You sound like what's-his-name"  
He said, "That's who I am  
But you can't wrap a name around you, boy  
'Cause it really don't mean a damn"

"You see, a song don't have much meaning  
When it don't have nothing to say  
What she could do was magic, son  
All I could do was play"

He started singing again  
That's when I drifted off  
Maybe I dreamed what I heard  
'Bout this stranger with his melody  
Who'd gone and lost the words

Hold that D chord on the old guitar  
'Til I found the G  
Drop it down to old E minor  
'Til the A chord rolls back home around to D

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